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ABSTRACT

Although the Shah of Iran should be admired for his efforts to use education to deal with formidable social challenges, his goal of producing a modern state in a single generation was unrealistic. Entrenched traditional values and unpredicted economic changes such as the need in 1977 to slow down Iran's rate of growth in the face of runaway inflation are counteracting his aims. The Shah has now lost much of his credibility as a leader. This may in turn undermine the faith of many Iranians in the western style modernization that the Shah advocated. An explosive situation has been created by reforms that have raised new aspirations and expectations that possibly can be satisfied only through some form of revolution. This conclusion, reached by the author in 1978, is based on an analysis of educational traditions and developments in Iran's history from 549 B.C. to the present. (Author/PGD)

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**THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF IRANIAN EDUCATION:
AN HISTORICAL SURVEY RELATED TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS**

by
David C. Woolman

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WORLD EDUCATION PROJECT

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PREFACE

"The Social Functions of Iranian Education" was written by David C. Woolman in December, 1978 as his contribution to a graduate seminar on "Culture and Education in the Middle East." We believe that Mr. Woolman's study contains useful information and interpretations for people who are comparative and international educators concerned about the Middle East.

David Woolman is a doctoral student in the multicultural/international Foundations of Education at The University of Connecticut. He is a graduate of Trinity College and received his M.A. from Rhode Island College, where he is presently an assistant professor and librarian of the Curriculum Center. From 1964 to 1967 Mr. Woolman worked as an education officer in the Teacher's College at Mubi, Nigeria.

The second series of World Education Monographs was inaugurated with "African Education: New Strategies in Curriculum Development" by Dr. David E.M. Panyako of Barber-Scotia College, Concord, North Carolina early in 1979. "The Social Functions of Iranian Education" is the second essay in the 1979 World Education Monograph Series. Your comments and suggestions regarding these publications or other activities of the World Education Project: The Center for Bilingual, Multicultural, International and Global Education at The University of Connecticut are invited.

Frank Andrews Stone, Director
Patricia S. Weibust, Associate Director
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Today the government of Iran teeters on the verge of collapse under a mounting tide of civil disorders. The parties of discontent are united in a tenuous but broad coalition of liberal democratic and conservative religious leaders. The latter seem bent on settling old scores by pushing for an end of the Pahlavi Dynasty whereas the former desire better checks on royal power in the context of a constitutional monarchy. Ironically the Shah, who is the main target of the opposition, has unleashed forces of modernization and progressive reform which have sought more social equality and education for the poorer classes for the first time in Iranian history. Nevertheless, massive corruption within the dynastic and aristocratic elite has overshadowed many positive aspects of the liberalizing measures such as land reform and expanding educational services. The windfall of petrodollars has largely benefited the socio-political elite and further confounded efforts aimed at correcting inequalities in the distribution of wealth. Moreover, the increase of education has probably sharpened awareness and criticism of the exploitative excesses of some of the aristocratic elite which has historically dominated Iran's social structure. Education is condoned by the ruling family as essential to the rapid rise of a modern industrial state. However, poor integration of schooling with manpower needs and vast inequalities of educational opportunity have probably made education a catalyst in the present social outbursts. Moreover,

dislocations inherent in rapid social change have been heightened by stubborn resistance of the old order of the Shah and aristocracy to widen the social participation and rights of all Iranians.

These general propositions about the relationship of education to the present crisis will be assessed through a study of Iranian social history. The study will attempt to distinguish differences in the past and present roles of education in Persian society. The assumption to be tested is that modern changes in the social function of education in Iran have contributed to present social instability because Iran's culture is still dominated by pre-secular religious, familial, and feudal values.

I.

From ancient times until quite recently Iran's educational system was integrated with religion. The content, facilities, and practitioners of instruction were more often than not men of religious qualification. Moreover, religion was a central underpinning for the state. This aspect of the social order was dramatically changed after the 1920's when Reza Shah denied the Moslem clergy its traditional control of endowments used to finance education. The tradition of religious influence upon the secular order dates from the first millenium before Christ when Zoroaster's precepts formed a basis for morality and governed the training of youth. The society of this time was a military aristocracy dominated by nobles and royal dynasties with subordinate groups of merchants, craftsmen, and peasants. For the most part the children educated were sons and some daughters of the elite groups. Priests also functioned as teachers and thus had a direct hand in shaping the values and behavior of the future rulers.

The first notable Persian state, the Achaemenid Empire, was founded in 549 B.C. when Cyrus the Great subdued the Medes. The Greek writers Xenophon, Strabo, and others, and surviving parts of the Zend Avesta, a book of Zoroaster's teachings recorded in the second century A.D., provide a glimpse of education in this era. The values transmitted by education derived from Persia's situation as an authoritarian state with a rigid social hierarchy and the Zoroastrian view of the world

as a conflict of good and evil forces with entry into paradise dependent on good acts and obedience of law. The upper classes learned religion, law, and literature; the warrior class received extensive physical training; the masses got their religious beliefs and skills through family and peers in situations of everyday life. The role of formal education was to prepare the ruling class for its duties. Priests were the principal instructors. A tradition of reverence for great teachers originated in this period. The Avesta recognized innate and acquired wisdom. Values and judgment were inculcated through stories told to students by teachers who required the pupil to identify the correct moral lesson found in the tale. Morality was impressed upon the masses through the vehicle of proverbs and maxims, however, learning was mainly by rote. Prizes were conferred on teachers and students by the King as reward for outstanding work. The curriculum which was derived from ideas of the Avesta considered mental and physical training of equal importance. Some women were educated and a few even became priests of the Fire Temple. The focus of education was not on individual thought or identity but stressed conformity to existing values and prescribed roles within the social structure. The objective of formal education was maintenance of the state (King) and religion (Zoroastrianism).¹

The Achaemenid Empire fell to Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. and Persia was ruled by the Seleucids, who descended from Macedonian generals, until 122 B.C. The effect of Hellenism

on Persian education is ambiguous. One account by the Parsees (Zoroastrian descendents who fled to Bombay, India after the Arab Conquest in 651 A.D.) claims that Alexander had the Avesta burned. However, this seems somewhat inconsistent with the notion that Hellenism sought to combine the traditions of East and West. Greeks settled in Persia at this time but their religion had little impact on Persians even though aspects of Greek mythology clearly took hold further east in north India and in east central China along trade routes. Zoroastrianism persisted in Persia even though local cults also thrived during Seleucid times. The Parthian Kings who ruled Persia from 123 B.C. to 224 A.D. turned against Hellenism and encouraged the revival of the old state religion of Zoroaster. The Persian cult of Mithras migrated west to Rome where it became popular. The sacred texts of Zoroaster, the Avesta, were collected and transcribed in Pahlavi (their language) and rendered in Aramaic script by several Parthian Kings (starting with Vologaeses III, 148-192 A.D.). However, the organized state function of education was scaled down because Persia remained a loose federation of vassal states in which nomadic warriors were the main support of the rulers.

The long period of intercourse with the Western values of Greece and Rome finally ended with the strong revival of Persian empire and religion under Sassanian rule from the 3d century A.D. until the Arab conquest of Persia in 651 A.D. The social structure and role of education was little changed from

Achaemenid times. A Palace school served the sons of the king, nobles, and other feudal chiefs who enjoyed royal favor. Other schools were situated adjacent to the Fire Temple and instruction was entrusted to the priests of Zoroaster. A higher school of Noshirvan located at Jund-i-Shapur (from 3d to 10th c. A.D.) trained future state administrators in literature, medicine, philosophy, theology, and astrology. Pahlavi texts of this period inform us that education was highly valued by those of the elite for whom it was reserved. For example, one source notes "education is the life of mankind", another that "men ought to raise themselves to illustrious positions by education to read and write", and also that "it is duty of parents to instruct their children...to do...good deeds".² The substance of schooling was the values of Zoroaster as recorded in the Avesta, along with old epics and ethical tales translated into Pahlavi which now had completely replaced Greek. Orthodox Zoroastrianism became increasingly intolerant of rival cults, thus showing signs that its long association with elite rule was undermining its hold on the masses. For example, one popular rival sect of Mazdak which favored the abolition of aristocratic wealth was finally subdued in a massacre of the faithful perpetrated by the Crown Prince and the Zoroastrian Chief Priest.

Throughout the Zoroastrian age (1000 B.C. to 651 A.D.) Persia maintained a fairly stable class structure of royal dynasts, nobility, warriors, and priests as rulers of a large mass of merchants, craftsmen, and peasants who were taxed to

support the established church and state. Training in ideas was controlled by the State religion of Zoroastrianism. Physical excellence was highly valued because of the need for success in war to expand and maintain the empire. Individual excellence was encouraged within the context of conformity to the social roles and values of the aristocratic state and its official religion. Education existed solely to buttress the existing class structure and religion; it was not concerned in any way with change. Therefore the privilege of schooling was reserved for the ruling class and its servants.³

II.

The conquest of Persia by the Arabs spelled the end of Zoroastrianism and ushered in a period of national disunity in which Persian traditions struggled for survival against successive intrusions from Arabia, Baghdad, Turkey, and Mongolia. Education, which reflected the new competition of cultures, transmitted a variety of messages albeit unified in formal structure by the new tradition of Islam. In general a feudal social order prevailed throughout this period. On the whole, access to education was still narrowly restricted to those of upper class origins. Persia's social structure remained unchanged except for periodic infusions of new foreign overlords. In essence the old order of a nomadic military aristocracy, settled nobility, civil service, and now a Muslim

religious caste still controlled a taxable estate of peasants, craftsmen, and merchants. However, under Islam rudimentary schooling was provided for some of the poor in the kuttabs or elementary Quranic schools. A flourishing literature of Persian poetry and prose emerged once the power of the Baghdad caliphate began to ebb around 800 A.D.; the court poets revived the epic tales of Persia's past and wrote elaborate praises of the Persian dynasts who were their masters. These works revived the national spirit and are still found in Iran's school curricula today.

Under Umayyad and Abbasid rule Persia was ruled by Sunni Moslem caliphs whose capital was Baghdad. However, Persia became a center for rival sects of Islam soon after the Arab conquest. Each sect established schools to train adherents in its doctrine. The Sufi and Shia sects had an immediate following of native Persians because the orthodox Sunni tended to be the faith of foreign overlords of Baghdad or Turkey. Sufi schools began in Persia with the Basra School established by Hasan al Basri in the late 7th c. A.D.; their teaching stressed direct vision of God by man and an ascetic life of meditation. An extremist Sufi branch founded by Ibrahim Adham was based in Khurasan and called for poverty and a life style that transcended the dictates of public opinion and sought self-blame in protest of corrupt conventions. Shiism also took root as a resistance to the Sunni rulers; its center was at Qum from which the beliefs were spread in

many cities by cells and discussion groups. The Sunni rulers were naturally able to outdistance the educational efforts of the Sufi and Shia sects because of their larger treasury. Moreover, their emphasis on the rule of written laws must have attracted some of the Persian nobility. Two branches of Sunni law, Al Shafii and Hanafi, were predominant in Persia; schools existed in Fars, Isfahan, Ray, Khurasan, and Tabaristan.

For the masses basic education in Koran, Arabic poetry, simple arithmetic, and writing was offered at kuttab schools; though learning was by rote and most teaching mere recitation drill these basics were probably enough for ordinary people who learned vocational skills directly on the job or through apprenticeship. More serious students might seek out a religious scholar at his home for instruction. Ibn Sina, a Persian philosopher of the early 11th c. A.D., identified the principles of love, interests, activity, and physical training as important elements of education. In the 11th c. A.D. one of the earliest madrasas or religious colleges was established at the Khurasan Mosque.

Secular education was still indistinct from religious education as it had been since Achaemenid times. Even apprentices were taught the Koran by masters. Moreover, political conflicts such as Persian resistance to foreign domination were reflected to some extent in the different religious schools. This development is of future significance, for the political role of religion recurs throughout Iranian history. In the

modern era various leaders of Iran's Moslems have preached against foreign influence.

Most schools of this era, as later, depended on community contribution or the endowment of a benefactor. Often fees consisted of a donation by parents to the mosque or teacher which undertook to educate the child. After the conquest of Persia by the Seljuk Turks, state supported education arose to train Sunni officials to staff the administrative bureaucracy. The architect of this innovation was Nizam al Mulk, a Vizier of Malik Shah in the 11th c. A.D.; in his honor the madrasas were called Nizamiyyas. Students' expenses were fully paid by the state treasury. The curricula included the Koran, the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith), jurisprudence, Arabic language and literature (Arabiyya), inheritance law (Faraid), and theology (Kalam). Another motive for these schools' creation was the need felt in Baghdad to counteract the work of the Fatimid madrasa of Al Azhar in Cairo. It was also hoped that these schools would tighten the linkage of religious scholars (ulema) and governing class. Their effect has been the subject of debate. Some feel that they were successful in Persianizing the foreign overlords while Islamicizing the Persians. Others have interpreted these schools as instruments to further Sunni dominance.

While Sunni control was being strengthened in the Nizamiyyas, other sects also flourished. Sufism, which was protected by Al Mulk, reached its highest level in Iran from the

11th to the 14th centuries. The Shias were dominant in western Iran and had madrasas at Ray, Qum, Aveh, Varamur, and Sabzavar. Another sect, the Ismailis, taught that personal awareness was transcendent over the written rules of Moslem law (sharia); members had to engage in a long process of reflection, doubt, questioning, and gradual apprehension of promise through acquired knowledge of the sect's secrets. The teacher for Ismailis was a cosmic being and living guide to life.

The renaissance of culture fostered by medieval Islam brought a flourish of educational philosophy in Persia. Some thinkers dwelt on the proper education of princes. Kai Kaus Ibn Iskander, a South Caspian prince of the 11th c. A.D., prescribed character building, recreation, human relations, and practical arts for his son's training. Nizam al Mulk's Siyasatnameh proposes to school princes in the methods of government through anecdotes, maxims, and narration of past examples. More general theories of education illustrate true conceptual sophistication. Al Gazzali's Revivification of Science and Religion noted the role of the senses, environment, adult example, reward and punishment, habit, and motivation in learning. Nasir al Din Tusi noted the dependence of occupational choice on human nature and the need to educate boys and girls. A woman's madrasa was endowed at Shiraz in this period by Zahida Khatum. Sa'di devotes a chapter to the effect of education in his work Golistan in which he discusses the effects of heredity and human associations on learning and advocates the

teaching of practical arts. Sufi thought centered on a mystical ideal in which the person sought identification with a saint or god and sought to realize these values through his life.

The development of art, literature, thought, and education in Persia received a severe setback with the Mongol invasions of the 13th and 14th centuries. Most schools were destroyed and Ghengis Khan put entire cities to the sword as his armies swept westward through Persia. Ibn Battuta, a traveler in central Iran in the 13th c. A.D., spoke of the land as "derelict and deserted". Politically Persia was reduced to near anarchy as numerous feudal Khans and lords competed for wealth and territory. However, the Mongols were rapidly absorbed into the Islamic Persian culture. A second devastation by Tamerlane in the early 15th century further reduced Iran so that tribal federations were the only remaining form of authority. In spite of these onslaughts a Sufi Persian culture survived while the ruling Sunni order was steadily enervated by successive waves of eastern invasions. Nevertheless, as the nomadic invaders either drifted on or were absorbed the way was cleared for a new revival of Persian nationality.⁴

III.

The reign of Shah Ismail I which began in 1502 marks the start of Iran's modern national emergence. Ismail descended from the Shiite Sufi Safawi of the 14th century. Throughout

the harsh years of eastern invasions the Sufi's had maintained their culture in guilds organized around venerated sheikhs or religious teachers. In urban resistance cells and by the propagandizing of street singers they managed to spread their message among the populace. Ismail I now declared the Shiite branch of Islam to be the official faith in Persia after 850 years of Sunni rule. Many Persians who were Sunni now underwent conversion to the Shiite beliefs. Nevertheless, the early Safavids faced severe challenge by the Sunni Ottoman Turks who nearly succeeded in destroying their rule.

Under the Safavid dynasty culture was renewed and educational institutions were greatly strengthened. The family remained a major agent for education. With the revival of cities formal schools also spread. The maktabas provided elementary education for the children of the upper and middle classes (i.e. landlords, businessmen, government officials, etc.). The madrasas offered an elite course of philosophy, literature, science, and math which attracted but a handful of students. These individuals chose their teachers and their specialization. Practical vocational training occurred in the bazaars where youths were apprenticed to one of many trades associated with oriental arts and crafts. The pattern in apprenticeship often worked to the advantage of sons of masters since trades and businesses were organized along close knit family ties. Another tradition of Persian culture, physical fitness, was served by recreational institutes known as Zurkhana or "House

of Strength". Here young men of the upper and middle classes engaged in calisthenics and wrestling; the rigid social structure is shown by the fact that men would exercise only with peers of an equivalent social rank.

The revival of Persia's cities is shown by a report on Isfahan, the Safavid capital, in the 16th c. A.D. which noted a population of 600,000, with 160 mosques, 100 maktabas, 46 madrasas, and 2000 caravanserais. The high point of the Safavid rule occurred under Shah Abbas I (1587-1629). Under him Persia had its first contact with Portuguese and English traders in the Gulf. Abbas furthered Persian national identity by supplanting the hadj to Sunni Mecca with pilgrimages conducted to the Shiite shrines of Imam Reza at Meshed and Sister Fatima at Qum. Painting and architecture flourished under the Safavids; painters freely depicted human and animal forms including erotic themes which violated traditional Islamic strictures but were expressive of Persian culture. Abbas also allowed Christian missionaries into Persia. After Abbas, Persia sank gradually into decline, palace intrigues, and civil war which culminated in the rule of Nadir Shah (1736-1747) who rose from humble nomadic roots to serve and finally capture the throne by his military prowess. Throughout this era of turbulence we sense that the major form of education consisted of a training in the martial arts which each would-be ruler needed if he was to gain his objective.⁵

IV.

The rise of modern secular education in Iran is regrettably also associated with a period in which the Persian government sank into defeat, disorder, and corruption. Consequently Persia became a sphere of influence for foreign European powers like Russia, France, and Britain. Modernization through education was inextricably linked with government relationships with alien powers which were often perceived by liberals and religious leaders as exploitative and devoid of benefit to the mass of Iranian people. The spectre of the "sell out" of Iran to foreign concessionaires by Persian dynasts and their elite was more often than not a reality. Moreover, until quite recently, the limited opportunities for Western education were monopolized by this ruling class to perpetuate its own power. Today's conservative religious rebuttal of the Shah's reforms and modernization is best understood in this historical context as a natural reaction to a recurring pattern of imperialism by a native social oligarchy.

The Kajar dynasty ruled Iran from 1795 to 1925. Defeats by Russia caused these rulers to look to Europe for modern training. Abbas Mirza, a Crown Prince, sent seven Persian students to England in 1811-15; they returned as doctor, gunsmith, engineer, chemist, artillery expert, teacher, and printer. The conflict between religion and modern ideas emerged immediately when one of Mirza's students publicized his views

that the clergy was to blame for Persia's backwardness. Five more students were sent to study in Paris in 1845. Then in 1848 Amir E. Kabir, the talented Vizier of Shah Naser Al-Din, established Dar Al Fonun, a Polytechnic Institute, to train an elite on modern lines for government service. The curriculum included medicine, mining, and military science; the school had its own press and published a number of scientific reports. Austrian instructors were chosen because France and Britain were then vying for big power influence in Persia. Dar Al Fonun was the only government sponsored education in Iran in the 19th century. Its role was to provide the sons of the aristocracy with the degrees now needed to complement their social pedigree for state service.

The foreign mission school came to Persia in the 19th century; Americans were at Rezaiyeh in 1836, French Lazerites established at Tabriz in 1839, and the British got to Isfahan by 1870. Most major cities had mission schools; proselytization was not very successful. Nevertheless, the schools were the main contact of Persians with Western ideas and as such they produced a small educated middle class. Two Americans were significant in this effort; Samuel Jordan established a college in Iran to keep Persian college students within their culture in the formative years and Dr. Mary Smith established a girls' school in Tehran.

The net effect of modern education in the 19th century was to widen further the gap between social classes in Iran. Religious education remained the only training available to most

children in cities as well as remote villages; even this was gained by few. Persia entered the 20th century with a small middle class trained in Western mission schools, a state bureaucracy dominated by sons of the aristocratic elite, and Islamic schools for the masses which depended on endowments and fees which further limited enrollments. The result was mass illiteracy; nonetheless, functional skills were well-learned from relatives or masters as they had been for centuries.

A Ministry of Education had been started in 1855, however, serious consideration of modern education did not start until 1897 with the Education Council. The Council chose the French system as its model. The 1907 constitution led to Iran's first Education Law in 1911 which stated that elementary education was to be compulsory for all over age 7. However, this law was nearly as ineffectual as the constitution which failed to check the power and corruption of the Kajar rulers. Nonetheless, primary education quadrupled from 1910 to 1922 as schools increased from 110 to 440 and pupils (80% boys) from 10,000 to 43,025.

The 1921 coup of Reza Khan, a commander of the Iranian Cossack brigade who subsequently adopted the ancient Iranian name "Pahlavi" for his dynasty and had the majlis depose the last Kajar shah in 1925, began a period of vigorous reform along Western lines. Religious education was dealt a severe blow when the Shah stripped the clergy of its traditional endowments. Uniform syllabi and standard texts were adopted in state run

schools. The Persian language, Parsi, was further nationalized by removal of Arabic words. Private schools were also brought under state supervision and finally taken over in 1941. In 1936 a movement to remove the veil for women began in schools and government offices. After 1928 the Shah began sending students abroad to study science, math, medicine, engineering, and education. The model for these policies was the recent transformation in Turkey under Kemal Ataturk. In Iran the first colleges to train secondary school teachers were established. Secondary schools were tuition-free by statute from 1933, however, this law was not effectual even in the 1950's. Tehran University, Iran's first, was founded in 1934. In 1935 compulsory, free, and universal primary education with coeducational schools up to age 10 were legislated, however, inadequate resources and lack of enforcement delayed these achievements indefinitely. The government began to use primary schools for adult literacy classes in 1936. In spite of all these efforts education was still mainly an urban service reaching a small minority of Iran's children. Illiteracy remained at over 90 percent and had declined to only 85 percent by 1953.

The occupation of Iran by British and Russian forces during World War II led to the exile of Reza Shah who was pro-German. However, his son was able to establish his rule and steadily gained power through the 1950's. In the early 1960's the Shah announced his intent to convert Iran into a fully modern industrialized country within a generation. His program, the "White

Revolution", amounted to social reform by decree and encompassed sweeping measures of land redistribution, educational reform, and industrial growth. In 1963 the Shah announced his plan for an educational "risorgimento" and unveiled the Literacy Corps, a two-year alternative to military service which trained youth to serve as basic literacy teachers in rural areas not served by schools. In addition efforts were made to expand educational opportunities for lower and middle class students through creation of a polytechnic school in Tehran and numerous training institutes and colleges attached to government ministries. Vocational technical training has received high priority in line with the Shah's hopes for rapid industrialization. More recently Universities of Work or National Industrial Training Centers based on a Belgian model have been created in four cities to train technicians (3½ year course) and industrial engineers and managers (7 year course). Enrollments in vocational-technical education have risen significantly from 9000 in 1962 to 92,000 in 1973.

Another crucial need addressed by the Shah's program is the lack of educational services outside Iran's cities. For example in 1965 there were only 6 secondary schools in towns of less than 5000 persons whereas 68.9 percent of the population resides in these smaller communities. In addition to lack of education for the general rural population, Iran also faced a need to better integrate a sizable nomadic tribal population. All this is a formidable challenge since sufficient trained

teachers and facilities are lacking. Regional secondary schools are gradually being built. Literacy corpsmen who elect to continue are guaranteed teaching jobs, however, their training is hardly adequate. To free resources for rural needs the government has again permitted private schools to operate K-12 facilities in cities; this has led to abuses and profiteering. An innovative solution to tribal education is the white tent school run by teachers who live and move with the tribe; a tribal secondary school has been opened in Shiraz.

One of Iran's biggest problems concerns the interface of education and societal needs for manpower. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that over 40 percent of the population is below age 15. As industrialization expands new needs are created for new skills, however, so many variables influence the rate of growth that exact prediction is often impossible. Thus it is never certain that the products of a planned system can be absorbed usefully. However, the major difficulty to date has been shortage rather than oversupply of technical skills. Yet the education system has overproduced in many categories. For example, Iran loses 1000 professionals per year through the "brain drain"; up to 90 per cent of these are doctors. Many choose not to return because their class status denies them the connections necessary to secure a good job in Iran. The oversupply of professionals is augmented by 9 universities now operating in Iran. Therefore the government has recently introduced a new system of education designed to provide pre-secondary

school guidance for students in choosing a secondary, technical-vocational, or comprehensive high school. This is formulated as a 5-3-4-4 structure and replaces the former 6-3-3-4 sequence. The Guidance School lies between Primary and upper Secondary school and assumes a channeling role within a flexible secondary program (i.e. pupils can change tracks); its effect will depend greatly on whether adequate teacher training occurs to staff this phase with properly oriented personnel.⁶

V.

The aim of this study has been to survey the development of education in Persia or Iran to discern what changes have occurred and analyze to what degree these trends have contributed to social instability at present. Several changes in the 20th century are major breaks with past tradition. First the abrupt termination of religious education in a country with a devout Moslem population is bound to cause repercussions. Since Achaemenid times schooling in Persia was integrally involved with religion which was the source of values and curricula. The secularization of education over the last 50 years is a radical departure from a long-standing pattern; therefore, it is certain that forces still exist within the society which desire to restore some aspects of religious control of education.

In any period of rapid social change the burden of proof is largely on the new order. This burden is increased when change is imposed from the top down as in modern Iran. The

modern Persian educational system has not thus far demonstrated the flexibility and coordination needed to help persons bridge the differences in values and performance between the traditional society and the emergent industrial order. Historically education was identified as a hallmark of the class which was politically influential by virtue of birth. This notion of education is still prevalent and encourages most students to select academic tracks which diverge from the technical-vocational fields. The schools, therefore, inevitably turn out many who are not employable and who either become disenchanted with the modern state or bloat the ranks of the national bureaucracy.

Another problem is created by official injustice, corruption, and abuse of power which has recently attracted more attention within Iran than the many Western reforms introduced by the Shah. Strong notions of good and evil have existed in Iran since Zoroaster's day; Sufi-Shia Islam has strengthened these values by making good acts which accord with God's word in the Koran a matter of personal responsibility. Spiritual rather than secular thought is still a prevalent state of mind for judging the world in Iran. Therefore, the Shah's association with injustice, corruption, and denial of political freedom vitiates his reform capabilities because he is perceived by many as more of an evil than a good man. This conundrum is associated with a pattern of popular distrust of government, particularly that involved with foreign associations. This

attitude is based on many justifiable instances of exploitation by outsiders in collusion with Iranian dynasties over the last two centuries. Another difficulty comes from conflicting policies. For example, the Shah has sought to increase literacy and education on the one hand while denying broader participation in government with the other. As education increases, toleration for totalitarian rule usually diminishes to the point of eventual rebellion or indifferent apathy. Under these conditions the attitudes favorable to modernization can hardly be mustered.

The role of education within Iran's class structure is also transitional. Historically Iran has been ruled by a narrowly-based elite sometimes called "the thousand families". The purpose of advanced education until quite recently has been to certify members of this elite to govern the country; in effect the school degree was used to complement their birth-right. Now the Shah through the White Revolution has sought to expand the technical-managerial middle class while reducing the lands and privilege of the upper class. These changes have proven to be difficult to achieve, for in Iran a web of social aristocrats tends to dominate decision-making, appointments, and advancement whereas merit is a secondary consideration. On the one hand, this has hampered the emergence of faculty governance and merit criteria at Pahlavi University. On the other it serves to deny jobs to some highly trained Iranians of lower and middle class status who lack the means

or connections to buy the influence or favors needed in order to get ahead.

An explosive situation has been created by reforms which have raised new aspirations and expectations that possibly can only be satisfied through some form of a revolution. Whether this will be a regressive or a progressive revolution is still very much at issue. Meanwhile, the aristocracy and other high government officials have diverted much of Iran's income (which they still control) to European bank accounts, making it doubtful whether the state can remain solvent.

Although the Shah should be admired for his efforts to use education to deal with formidable social challenges, his goal of producing a modern state in a single generation was unrealistic. Entrenched traditional values and unpredicted economic changes such as the need in 1977 to slow down Iran's rate of growth in the face of runaway inflation are counteracting his aims. The Shah has now lost much of his credibility as a leader. This may in turn undermine the faith of many Iranians in the western style modernization that the Shah advocated. It is very possible that there will be a reversal of the trend toward westernization, given Iran's historic resistance to cultural changes of foreign origins. To borrow a phrase from Chinua Achebe, "things fall apart" sometimes when education and the other forces of social change get ahead of the capacity of a traditional society to adjust.

Footnotes

¹Sources for the pre-Hellenistic period include Arasteh, Educational and Social Awakening, pp 1-4; Dhalla, pp 82-85; A.V.W. Jackson, pp 644-49.

²Cited in Munroe, p. 645.

³Sources for the Sassanian era include Geldner, pp 942-43; Arasteh, op. cit., pp 1-4; Dhalla, pp 82-85; A.V.W. Jackson, pp 644-49.

⁴Sources for the Arab, Turkish, and Mongol Periods include S.H. Nasr, pp 442-63; S.H. Nasr and Mutahhari, pp 464-80; V. Danner, pp 566-94; Arasteh, op. cit., pp 1, 6-13, 17-18; C.E. Bosworth, pp 71-74; A.K.S. Lambton, pp 214-97; A. Bausani, pp 283-302; M.G.S. Hodgson, pp 422-82; Zonis, Political Elite of Iran, pp 163-64, 166; Y. Armajani, pp 81-82.

⁵Source for the Safavid era: Arasteh, p. 13.

⁶Sources for the modern era (19th and 20th centuries) are Y. Armajani, pp 7-17, 118-22, 142-43, 152-54; Zonis, op. cit., pp 32-37, 142-43, 157, 164-70, 174; A.A. Paydarfar, pp 11, 17, 27; Iran Today, pp 42-46, 103; F. Barth, Principles of Social Organization in Southern Kurdistan, pp 92-95; D. Behnam, pp 39-40; Ben Harris, pp 430-37; N. Jacobs, pp 153-71; D.N. Wilbur, pp 168-194; J.A. Bill, pp 54, 56, 58, 63, 65, 68-69, 78-99; D. Furter, pp 7-13; A.P. Saleh, pp 187-192, 324, 355-60, 375-76; A.S. Mehdevi, pp 227-29, 258-59; C. Harnack, pp 42-64; W.S. Haas, pp 33, 41; R.L. Loeffler, pp 266-87; M. Afzal, pp 211-16; J.S. Szyliowicz, pp 387-440, 466-67.

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